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ABSTRACT

This document presents information for Saskatchewan administrators who are considering rescheduling the traditional school day or school year. It discusses reasons for changing school schedules and identifies educational, societal, and economic concerns around the change. Steps in the change process include: evaluation/needs assessment; design/validation; implementation/verification; and maintenance/continuation. A sample checklist of criteria for assessing school-calendar proposals is included. Successful examples of school-calendar changes are also highlighted, such as the 4-day week, extended school-year programs, rotating terms, flexible designs, and mandatory attendance designs. The final section describes the various educational, societal, economic, employee, and legislative concerns that any calendar-change program must face. A list of contact groups is included. (LMI)

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RESEARCH IN BRIEF

Rescheduling the Traditional School Day / School Year

SSTA RESEARCH CENTRE REPORT: #93-08 DATE: November 1993

The school year and day can be changed - there are many successful examples that have occurred over the past twenty-five years.

Rescheduling the Traditional School Day / School Year was developed for the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association by Al Schell and edited by Glen Penner. The purpose of this document is to help you ask the necessary questions and undertake an appropriate process with your publics if you are interested in change.

If there is sufficient support through analysis of the educational, societal, economic and legislative implications of altering the school day or year, then the decision will come down to political will to change.

In other words, if change does not occur it will not be because there is no evidence of successful change, but rather, that you do not believe the risks justify the effort.

The opinions and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and may not be in agreement with SSTA officers or trustees, but are offered as being worthy of consideration by those responsible for making decisions.

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Contents

I. WHY CONSIDER CHANGE? 2

A Introduction 2
B Major Implications 3

II. WHAT STEPS NEED TO BE TAKEN? 4

A. Phase 1 - Evaluation/Needs Assessment 5
B. Phase 2 - Design/Validation 6
C. Phase 3 - Implementation/Verification 8
D. Phase 4 - Maintenance/Continuation 9
E. A Checklist For Easy Reference 11

III. ARE THERE SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF CHANGE? 13

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGING THE SCHOOL YEAR/DAY 18

A. Educational Implications 19
B. Societal Implications 21
C. Economic Implications 23
D. Employee Implications 25
E. Legislative Implications 28

V. WHO WILL BE INTERESTED? 31

VI. CONCLUSION 33

I. WHY CONSIDER CHANGE?

A. INTRODUCTION

Periodically, questions arise regarding the appropriateness of the traditional North American school year/day structure which was originally designed to meet the needs of an agrarian society. The appropriateness of this structure, defined in The School Act (Saskatchewan Education, 1978), is presently being questioned as a result of current conditions and constantly changing social, economic and educational situations. Typically, such questions arise as a result of non-educational concerns which are financial in nature.

The current school year structure in Saskatchewan is based upon the needs of an agrarian economy. The September-to-June school year allows for the involvement of students in the tending and harvesting of crops and the traditional family "summer holiday". Interestingly, this school year structure reflects the needs of the past, since relatively few students today are actively involved in farming and farming practice today is quite different from that of past years. As well, holiday patterns for workers are generally less rigid than in the past so that family holidays may be taken at various times during the year. Interesting, too, is the fact that the present school year structure bears no resemblance to the economic and occupational pattern of northern residents who are more directly affected by fishing and hunting cycles than by the traditional farming cycle.

The school day structure presently reflects the typical five-day work-week which is consistent with the expectations of the majority of non-agricultural workers in the province. The 8:30/9:00 A.M. to 3:30/4:00 P.M. school day allows parents to work out of the home without incurring major child-care costs and to engage in family activities in the evening. While it is not necessarily consistent with the work day of the farmer, it allows time for the transportation of children to and from school with a minimum of disruption and inconvenience to family life. Weekends are unencumbered to allow for family-related activities of various kinds.

The fact that this pattern is inconsistent with the needs and lifestyles of many is reflected in minor adjustments such as extended day-care in schools, supervised lunch hours and after school recreational activities.

Innovations such as full-day Kindergarten and student transportation provisions also indicate some discrepancy between the existing school day structure and the needs of families and communities.

It should also be noted that life long learning is a component of contemporary and future societies; that new living/learning systems need to be developed to accommodate the explosion of knowledge; that retraining people will be necessary as technology creates new essential skills and eliminates certain occupations and that new coping skills will be necessary to adjust to rapid change.

Finally, it recognizes that the locus of control in the preparation of students for the future is changing from one of mandated institutional, governmental control to one which is more in tune with local, individual decision making.

B. MAJOR IMPLICATIONS

Motivations for suggesting possible change to the school year/day come from a number of perspectives. These include economic, educational and societal concerns related to the provision of education. While the following list is not comprehensive, it contains some of the most commonly identified motivations for considering a change to the traditional school year.

1 Educational Concerns

- Provision of appropriate learning time.
- Learning regression/loss.
- Educator welfare.
- Provision of optimum learning opportunities.
- Provision of co-curricular activities.
- Provision of special services.
- Organization/scheduling of classes and activities.
- Accountability to public.
- Impact on staff and program.
- Mobility of students.
- Learning technology and distance education.

2 **Societal Concerns**

- Child care needs.
- Family life-style needs.
- Employment possibilities for students.
- Vandalism/nuisance prevention.
- Child transportation time and cost.
- Costs in the form of taxes and direct
- support.

3 **Economic Concerns**

- Cost of capital expended in building new or larger schools.
- Cost of transporting students.
- Cost of operating schools.
- Cost of employing staff.
- Cost of providing teacher inservice.

While these sample concerns have been identified within various categories, they, and many others, are pervasive and could be considered from many other perspectives. Also, they should be seen as concerns which might encourage change to the traditional school year rather than justification for such change.

Collectively, they represent the types of concerns which illustrate the need for schools that meet the needs of the existing society.

II. WHAT STEPS NEED TO BE TAKEN?

The establishment of appropriate processes for investigating possibilities for school year/day adjustment are essential if change is to result. Processes must be informative, collaborative, inclusive and evolutionary if they are to be successful. Pronouncements of change without prior discussion and input are doomed to failure. In all cases of successful change, there have been extended periods of exploration, consideration, and input prior to finalization. Such periods should, typically, take one year to eighteen months (Apker, 1988).

The following procedures are designed to provide a structure for deciding upon and utilizing appropriate adjustments to the existing school year/day. They are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather, to serve as a guide to local decision-making and activity. They represent a framework only -- specific activities and

processes are left to the discretion of local school jurisdictions. These procedures assume that activity will be evolutionary and collaborative and that proposed outcomes will be evaluated upon their institution. They also assume that the activity will be carried out by the Board of Education or designate and that continuity of leadership will be provided.

A. PHASE 1 - EVALUATION/NEEDS ASSESSMENT

General Information

The general purpose of this phase is to establish the need for change from the traditional year/day in order to solve or alleviate a particular problem. The process should discover the gap between identified needs and current practice--the difference between what is and what could be.

It is important to involve a variety of groups (particularly major stakeholders) during this phase.

Product

The product of this phase is a statement of agreed-upon problems that need to be solved.

Procedure	Action
- Identify specific problems to be solved.	- Analyze the existing situation through regular processes. (eg. annual report and budget preparation). - Request additional input from stakeholders. - Analyze input obtained. - Communicate the findings which identify the problems.
- Establish the general level of agreement regarding the problems to be solved.	- Request input from stakeholders to establish agreement. - Conduct informational meetings as appropriate.

B. PHASE 2 - DESIGN/VALIDATION

General Information

The purpose of this phase is to research and conceptualize proposed plans which will meet the identified need.

This is a complex phase since it involves validation of a proposed plan with all stakeholders and the community in general. It also involves a confirmation of its feasibility in the light of the significant implications outlined in this publication and, possibly, others. Collaborative planning and discussion are essential. In some cases, consultation with agencies and organizations external to the community is necessary i.e. Department of Education, Training and Employment or the S.T.F. It is important to recognize that there is likely to be significant (30% or more) opposition to any change and that a discussion period is important. Endless discussion and debate is likely to prove fruitless (Apker, 1988). It is also important to recognize that overt support for any change must be planned for and provided if it is to be successful.

Product

The product of this phase is a specific plan for solving the previously agreed-upon problems. It must present an approach which has been judged to be both acceptable and feasible to which the majority of stakeholders is committed. The decision to produce and proceed with this plan is the mandate of the Board.

Procedure	Action
- Identify desired features to be included or evident in any change.	- Refer to agreed-upon specific problems to be solved. - Propose features which may solve these problems. (This may be considered as part of Phase 1.)
- Identify and research issues surrounding adjustment to the traditional school year/ day.	- Research the topic. (Begin by reviewing the issues outlined in this publication and then proceed.)

Procedure	Action
	- Consult with various information sources. (Some have been listed in this publication.) - Obtain input from stakeholders.
- Identify possible changes.	- Research the topic. - Consult with various information sources, including other School Divisions and those listed in this document.
- Select a preferred change.	-Verify its appropriateness by considering pro's and con's. (Force-Field Analysis may be useful.) - Consult with various information sources. - Conduct a simulation to determine feasibility.
- Prepare a detailed, written proposal for change for consideration by stakeholders. **Note:** Some changes will require the approval of the Minister of Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment	- Identify implications to be dealt with. - Write the proposal outlining rationale, specific features operational norms and activities, benefits, implications, duration, monitoring, etc. - Consult with sources (particularly organizations/ agencies which have a high stake in the change) for their reaction and advice.
- Validate the proposed change in terms of both acceptability and feasibility.	- Communicate the plan to stakeholders, preferably through small or job-alike meetings. - Request input and reaction for fine tuning only from stakeholders. - Obtain any statements of support or approvals required from legal counsel, affected organizations or government agencies.

C. PHASE 3 - IMPLEMENTATION/VERIFICATION

General Information

During this phase, the emphasis is upon implementing the change. In most cases, it is useful to pilot the plan for one or two school years in order to determine its acceptability and feasibility. Revisions are often desirable in the light of the effects of the pilot and the reaction of those affected. It is also important to decide upon the nature of use - mandatory or voluntary - since this can influence the acceptability and effectiveness of the change. As in Phase 1 and 2, it is important to involve all stakeholders to the degree possible in implementing and monitoring activities.

Product

The product of this phase is an adjusted school year/day a staff who are prepared/trained to work productively within the new pattern, and a community supportive of the change.

Procedure	Action
- Prepare staff and community for the new situation.	- Communicate decisions and describe the new situation and its implications. - Provide employee inservice to prepare for upcoming changes. - Train staff (particularly administrators) to handle both the operational changes and the numerous questions which will arise. - Provide for periodic discussions and review of procedures.
- Implement the adjusted year/day.	- Announce, officially, the details of the new pattern. - Provide for all physical changes. - Provide open lines of communication and support.

Procedure	Action
- Monitor the degree and effectiveness of the implementation.	- Obtain input from staff and community members. - Compile descriptive information for immediate and future use. - Provide feedback to staff and community members about the implementation.
- Provide on-going support.	- Provide for recognition of exemplary actions and features. - Provide for those things that emerge as dissatisfiers or barriers to full implementation.

D. PHASE 4 - MAINTENANCE/CONTINUATION

General Information

During this phase, the emphasis is upon supporting and revitalizing the change. Without continuing attention and support, it may be seen as a passing fad and abandoned in the interests of conforming with tradition. Appropriate support (human and financial) can be determined only through continued monitoring by means of inter-personal communication, observation, structured feedback, etc. It is important to recognize that there is likely to be continuing opposition from a percentage of those involved and that a means of dealing with their opposition must be determined since the lure of tradition is great. Also, it is important to recognize that the make-up of affected groups will change over time, necessitating continuing communication.

Product

The product of this phase is a successfully functioning adjustment to the traditional school year/day.

Procedure	Action
- Provide on-going support.	- Through regular procedures, provide for the provision of human and material resources. - Continue to provide for two-way communication and suggestions for improvement. - Continue to provide staff inservice as required.
- Provide for periodic monitoring.	- Obtain input from staff, students and community members. - Compile descriptive information for immediate and future use. - Provide feedback to staff, students and community members about the implementation. - Provide for recognition of exemplary actions and features.
- Revise or fine-tune as appropriate.	- Provide for those things that emerge as dissatisfactions or barriers to full operationalization. - Collaborate with stakeholders to provide for variations, changes or additions as required. (These do <u>not</u> include abandonment of the adjustment.)
- Provide for on-going communication.	- Encourage two-way communication between school and community. - Convene meetings, periodically, with specific groups of stakeholders to share perceptions/ expectations. - Provide for community- wide publicity to counteract continuing opposition from some community members.

E. A CHECKLIST FOR EASY REFERENCE

The following checklist developed for Oregon schools outlining the criteria for approving alternative school calendar proposals may be of use to you.

Criteria for Approving Alternative School Calendar Proposals

1. Initial or continuing applications for an alternative school year shall be submitted to Superintendent of Public Instruction at least 90 days prior to the implementation of the program.

2. The initial application shall contain:

   2.1 Request from local school district for waiver of Standard 581-22-502 including a copy of local board resolution approving application for waiver and agreeing to pilot program status.

   2.2 Outline of the basic plan for operating alternative school calendar to include:

      2.2.1 Need addressed by the proposal.
      2.2.2 Goals of the proposal.
      2.2.3 Plan for accomplishing goals to include at least:

         - Maintaining instructional time with present and proposed schedules.
         - Impact on support programs (i.e., counseling, safety, media).
         - Impact on student activities.
         - Impact on school standards.
         - List of estimated saving including a statement from auditor.

   2.3 Provide a staff development plan for implementing and maintaining the alternative calendar program.

   2.4 Provide a student and parent orientation plan.

   2.5 Provide a plan for keeping community involved and informed of program progress.

3. Provide an evaluation plan.

   3.1 Develop a procedure and timeline for gathering data for evaluation.

   3.2 Develop checkpoints for monitoring by staff, board, ESD and Department of Education.

   3.3 Provide the Department of Education with a written quarterly progress report.

   3.4 Agree to provide the Department of Education a complete evaluation report 30 days following the close of school. The report shall include at a minimum the following data:

      3.4.1 Impact on student achievement pre- and post-achievement scores.
      3.4.2 Student adjustment and reaction--document.
      3.4.3 Staff adjustment and reaction--document.
      3.4.4 Parent/home adjustment and reaction--document.
      3.4.5 Cost comparisons and previous year's expenditures.
      3.4.6 Comparison of student attendance.
      3.4.7 Transportation and facility utilization changes.
      3.4.8 Evidence of any changes which may have added or deferred from educational opportunities and services under this plan as compared to traditional calendar.
      3.4.9 The district may include any other data it deems necessary to support the program.

Application for Continuation of Alternative School Calendar

1. Applications for continuation as a pilot program for the alternative school calendar shall be submitted to Superintendent of Public Instruction (60 days prior to implementation).
2. Application for a continuation year pilot program status shall include:
   a. Waiver statement.
   b. Report of prior year evaluation.
   c. Changes to plan differing from first year plan.
   d. Rationale for continuation.

Source: Reinke, Joyce M. (1987). More with four: A look at the four day week in Oregon's small schools.

III. ARE THERE SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF CHANGE?

In spite of a number of impediments and barriers to adjustment of the traditional school year/day, changes are made. In a number of American states, particularly California, Utah, Nevada, and Illinois, various patterns have resulted in schools operating year-round with students attending in a staggered or phased pattern. In certain settings, schools operate on an extended daily schedule to allow for better use of facilities. In some instances, adjustments have been made to both the school day and the school week to allow for a four-day school week for students.

In each case of change, there has been a specific motivator which has prompted or required the change. This accounts for both the change away from the traditional pattern and the nature of the adjustment. Efforts at adjustment without the identification of a specific motivator or need are unlikely to be successful. Significantly, existing adjustments are quite varied, depending upon the specific need. Such changes are, typically, legitimized through permissive legislation rather than prescriptive legislation or state/provincial mandates. In all cases, the standard remains the traditional school year/day pattern.

The following overview of adjustments to the school calendar is reproduced from Time and Education (Thompson, 1985).

"The Four-Day Week

Although other reasons are occasionally given (Nelson, 1983), the primary purpose of the four-day week is to save money (Bauman, 1983). The plan is designed to reduce gas and other transportation costs and to cut down on the energy expenses associated with running a school.

With the four-day week plan, schools are usually closed either Monday or Friday. In order to have as much instructional time as the traditional five-day week, schools using the four-day week either lengthen the school day or extend the school year. Longer days often start 30 minutes earlier in the morning and end 30 to 40 minutes later in the afternoon. Elementary schools often cut the lunch hour to 30 minutes and add a mid-afternoon snack or rest break. Class periods are lengthened or an extra period per day is

added. In some areas the extra day is used for teacher inservice or planning sessions or for student field trips, athletic events, youth clubs, etc. (Bauman, 1983).

Perhaps the best known four-day program was implemented in Colorado. This program has received a great deal of coverage in the literature (Brubacher & Stiverson, 1982; Bauman, 1983; Richburg & Edelen, 1981; Richburg & Sjogren, 1982, 1983; Stiverson, 1982).

Colorado schools started switching to the four-day calendar in 1980, when 12 districts took advantage of permissive legislation. In 1981, an additional 10 large, sparsely populated districts switched, and in 1982 five more districts changed over. In 1983, 17 districts closed school on Mondays and 10 closed on Fridays. In many instances, the fifth day was used for field trips, athletic events and youth group activities (Bauman, 1983).

The four-day week is also used in California, Idaho, New Hampshire, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Montana, Florida, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. The public schools in Cimarron, New Mexico have used a four-day week for nine years, longer than any other school district (Bauman, 1983; Feldhausen, 1981).

The literature does not contain any descriptions of large urban school districts which use the four-day week. It seems to be most useful in rural districts that serve large geographic areas (Bauman, 1983). Nor does the literature contain any descriptions of the use of the four-day week in Canada. However, only a survey of school boards could determine this absolutely.

Where is the Four Day Week Being Used?

The public schools in Cimarron, New Mexico have used a four day week for nine years--longer than any other public school district. **Academic achievement has remained the same or improved, energy has been saved and there is a broad community support for this alternative schedule.**

Extended School Year Programs

An extended school year program is any program which is designed to extend the length of the traditional school year (Richmond, 1978). It is important to note that in an extended year program the school is open more days, but because of the rotational nature of some schedules, an individual student doesn't necessarily attend school for more days. The terms extended school year and year round school, while not completely synonymous, are often used interchangeably in the literature.

Interest in extended year programs is by no means a new phenomenon. Articles in the literature date back to the 1920's with periods of particular concentration occurring around 1925, 1947 (McKague & Penner, 1971) and in the early 1970's.

The social and economic situation today is very different than it was during these periods of peak interest in extended year programs. In the past, these programs were sometimes seen as a way of coping with teacher shortages, rapidly increasing enrolments, shortages of school buildings, and a wish to move students into the labour force as quickly as possible, situations which no longer exist today. Other reasons for the introduction of extended year programs include:

1. To make better use of costly plant facilities that are unused for 10-15% of the year (Dougherty, 1981; Richmond & Riegle, 1974);

2. To improve the curriculum and to pilot test innovative programs;

3. To prevent loss of basic skills due to the summer vacation gap (Dougherty, 1981; Richmond & Riegle, 1974);

4. To reduce the number of buildings necessary to house the entire student body;

5. To reduce juvenile delinquency by having students in school during the summer (Dougherty, 1981; Richmond & Riegle, 1974);

6. To provide curriculum enrichment programs;

7. To provide teacher employment during the summer months (Dougherty, 1981; Richmond & Riegle, 1974);

8. To provide additional assistance for disadvantaged students, handicapped students, or slow learners;

9. To permit acceleration of the gifted/talented student (Dougherty, 1981; Richmond & Riegle, 1974);

10. To improve educational achievements. (Dougherty, 1981)

As many as 50 different types of extended year programs have been identified (Univer, 1976). However these programs can all be grouped into three broad classifications: rotating designs, flexible designs and mandatory attendance designs (Richmond, 1978).

Rotating Designs

Rotating term or cycle designs may or may not permit individual student attendance beyond the traditional number of school days in a calendar year (Richmond, 1978).

> The 45-15 plan is an example of a rotating design. This plan divides the student body into four equal groups each of which attends for 45 days and then has 15 days vacation. By staggering groups each child attends school for 180 days a year. With this plan about one-third more students can be accommodated in the same space.
> (Penner, 1971)

Flexible Designs

Flexible designs offer a variety of student attendance and faculty employment options (Richmond, 1978). A program which offers an optional summer school has a flexible design.

Some programs, such as the four-quarter program, can be rotating or flexible. This plan divides the year into four equal parts. In a rotating four-quarter plan the student body is divided into four groups. The groups are staggered so that during any given quarter three groups are attending school and one group is on vacation. In a flexible four-quarter plan students can attend either three or four quarters. Those attending all four quarters accelerate their normal progress through school by one-quarter. (Penner, 1971)

Mandatory Attendance Designs

Mandatory attendance designs are those which require student attendance and a faculty employment for a prescribed number of days which exceeds the length of the traditional school year (Richmond, 1978).

Programs which simply add a certain number of compulsory school attendance days to the school year are examples of this type of design.

Implementation of Extended Year Programs

The literature contains dozens of descriptions of extended year programs which have been tried in the U.S. and a few descriptions of Canadian experiments. While schools are currently "open" approximately 20% of the year, extended year programs increase access to school buildings and programs Space does not permit even a listing of these various locations and programs. However, the growth rate for the implementation of extended year programs has all but halted, with few districts changing to this type of schedule in recent years (Merino, 1983)."

While the above overview provides general information regarding innovations made, it does not pretend to indicate appropriate directions for action by specific school jurisdictions. Such decisions can be made only by those fully aware of the local situation. It does, however, provide a useful resource for those investigating possibilities for change. Further detail about possible adjustment patterns can be found.

The most recent Canadian school system to seriously consider an alternative school year is Calgary Public. Year round schooling is being implemented through use of a rotating plan. Saskatchewan Trustees or Educators who are interested in increasing the utilization of their schools may wish to contact the Calgary system and the Canadian Centre for Year Round Education (416) 944-2652.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGING THE SCHOOL YEAR/DAY

The greatest single barrier to any change of the school year/day structure is tradition. When innovation comes into direct conflict with tradition - tradition wins (Perry, 1991). This has been the case with school year/day structures. While some flexibility is provided within existing provincial legislation, that legislation reflects and reinforces North American agrarian tradition. It also reflects general public acceptance which is all-important in matters relating to the welfare and future of children.

It is important to remember that changes to the traditional school year/day pattern have cumulative effects which influence entire patterns of life for educators, community members and students. This means that the question of any change to school year/day structures must be seen as a possible change in lifestyle for entire communities rather than a single, isolated change to traditional school routine.

If change is to occur it will be because the educational, societal, economic and legislative implications of altering the school year/day have been successfully addressed.

Anything short of dealing appropriately with the four major implications will result in failure.

A. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Student Performance

Suggested Approach

Due to the lack of agreement regarding the effects of specific school year/day patterns on student performance, it is unlikely that a particular adjustment will be made on the basis of student performance alone. As a result, it is important to take into consideration the question of student performance in any proposed adjustment by ensuring that student performance can be maximized. Attention should also be given to related issues such as community and employee acceptance.

Questions for Consideration

1. What procedures will be used to analyze possibilities and determine the most appropriate instructional time allocation/use?
2. How will comparisons be made between/among various adjustments?
3. How will the proposed adjustment impact upon student allocated time and time-on- task?
4. How will the instructional time provided be used most effectively?
5. Will the proposed adjustment provide/ allow for the use of a variety of instructional techniques?
6. How will student performance be evaluated?
7. How important a factor will student achievement be in deciding upon any adjustment?

Overview

Since the stated purpose of schooling in this province is to "develop the potential of each student to the fullest extent" (Directions, 1984) no issue deserves greater deliberation than does the issue of student performance. While many perspectives exist regarding relationships between school year/day patterns and student performance, there are no clear-cut answers.

Although there is a lack of agreement in the literature about the effect of specific school year/day structures on student performance, there is agreement about general relationships. Allocated time (time scheduled for instruction) usually has a relationship to achievement although there is no evidence that lengthening the school day or year will lead to higher student achievement (Penner, 1984). Students in adjusted school year patterns, regardless of the change, do as well as those in the traditional school year while not a single school which has introduced year-round education has experienced a drop in student achievement (Ballinger, 1987). What virtually all agree upon is that allocated time and time-on-task do influence student achievement. Although there is general agreement on this point, there is no agreement on the strength and importance of the relationships due to the effect of other variables such as type of student, type of course, instructional style, school climate, etc. Another point of general agreement is that schools could use existing time more effectively. This might be achieved partly by devoting more time to actual instruction and less to administrative and other non-instructional activities. It might also be achieved through the provision of instruction more appropriate to various student learning styles. A greater emphasis on transactional instruction as a means of engaging students in the learning task and less emphasis on transmission might prove to be beneficial. Finally, there is general agreement that problems/situations vary from school to school and that schools need to analyze their own situation in order to determine possibilities for improvement (Karweit, 1984).

Within this context, there is no good reason to alter the current legislated school year. While the Minister may require changes, boards of education have an obligation to demonstrate that the change they propose will enhance student learning.

B. SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS

Suggested Approach

The question of community acceptance should be addressed, recognizing that any adjustment represents a change in lifestyle. While decisions regarding actual adjustments to school year/day patterns are the mandate of the Board, involvement of community members through both informational and collaborative means throughout the process, of considering, accomplishing and operationalizing the adjustment is essential. Recognition that opposition will be present and continuing is also important in planning for any adjustment.

Questions for Consideration

1. What procedures will be used to analyze possibilities and determine the most appropriate adjustment in terms of community acceptance?
2. What information and support will be necessary in discussing possibilities?
3. What processes for information and dialogue will be provided?
4. How will the topic of adjustment be introduced?
5. What specific groups within the community will be contacted/ involved? How?
6. What time-interval will be provided for discussion?
7. How will opposition to change (usually 30% of population or more) be dealt with?
8. What procedures for decision-making will be put in place?
9. How important a factor will community acceptance be in deciding upon any adjustment?

Overview

For a hundred years and more, students have been attending school from nine to four (approximately) and enjoying a two-month summer vacation. In the evenings and on school holidays, some schools have served as community recreation centres and adult instruction centres while others have stood empty. This traditional pattern has become firmly established and any adjustment represents a change in life for not only the students but the entire community. While situations differ between rural and urban school communities, many of the same issues arise. According to the Ontario Select Committee on Education (Perry, 1991), in spite of economic or instructional benefits the debate regarding adjustment to the traditional school schedule centres around lifestyle. Specifically, disruptions to family summer vacations, school-aged child care, student summer employment, community activities and recreational activities are serious considerations. At a more personal/family level, concerns about family schedules, home routine, family time together and student transportation time prevail.

In spite of these concerns, adjustments have been made to both school day and school year patterns. Where this has occurred there has been either or both of the following:

- Overpowering need for change which left little alternative.
- Carefully planned and executed processes for involving the community in the decision to implement the change.

In either case, the involvement of parents and other groups within the community needs to be ensured. The community needs to understand what is being proposed initially and to be in continuous support. This involvement includes discussion of how perceived problems can be alleviated. The development of extensive lines of communication prior to, during and after the adoption of a new pattern are essential since the change must be seen as a philosophy for improvement rather than a "stop-gap" solution to be discarded when the specific problem no longer exists. This is extremely important since the typically 30 percent opposed become active at this stage (Apker, 1988).

C. ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Suggested Approach

The question of cost-effectiveness must be addressed. Regardless of what method is used, a detailed analysis of cost must be provided comparing costs of operation using the traditional year and costs using the adjusted pattern. This analysis should be conducted initially and at regular intervals during operation of the new plan (Penner, 1971). Both projected and real costs must be identified along with educational and societal implications.

Questions for Consideration

1. What procedures will be used to analyze possibilities and determine the most appropriate adjustment in terms of cost effectiveness?
2. How will comparisons be made between/ among various adjustments?
3. What determinants/processes will be used in selecting a proposed adjustment?
4. Who will be involved in discussing possibilities and reaching decisions? How will they be involved?
5. What procedures will be put in place to monitor actual cost effectiveness?
6. How important a factor will economic feasibility be in deciding upon any adjustment?

Overview

Proposed adjustments to the school year/day are often rooted in the contention that they will provide for quality education at a lower cost than traditional school patterns. In fact, economic motivations represent the major single reason for change although proposed answers vary widely. In Utah and California, year-round education was devised as a means of relieving overcrowding, alleviating teacher shortage, addressing the need for building new schools and increasing access to high-cost equipment such

as textbooks and computer technology (Perry, 1991). The four-day school week was devised in rural areas with sparse populations after 1973-74 as a means of saving energy costs for student transportation and reducing utility costs incurred in running schools. Schools on the four-day weeks have operated successfully in a number of American states for years. These include schools in Idaho, New Mexico, Maine, Montana, Florida and Wyoming where there are a number of rural districts that serve large geographical areas (Bauman, 1983). While figures vary, savings of 7% to 25% on heating fuel and 23% on electricity have been realized in Colorado by school districts on the four-day week.

While the innovations identified above carry with them the promise of financial savings, it is difficult to generalize about the likelihood of significant, long-term savings due to a variety of factors and uncertainties. In the case of the various year-round education plans which utilize school facilities throughout the year, money may be saved while student populations continue to grow since fewer facilities and supplies are required than in the traditional school year pattern. At best, money is saved, while at worst the expenditure remains the same or only slightly higher than in traditional patterns (Apker, 1988). In the case of the four-day week, determining savings may be difficult since buildings must be kept warm enough, or cool enough, to prevent damage to school supplies. While additional savings may be realized through the use of a four-day week due to reductions in costs for teacher absence, teacher preparation time and transportation of students, it is difficult to generalize in terms of real dollars saved.

Interestingly, studies done in areas utilizing either of these adjustments to the school year have revealed that community energy costs have risen although school costs have dropped. If this is, in fact, common, it must be taken into account when considering adjustments to the school year since school supporters are also community members and taxpayers.

Thompson (1985) provides an evaluation of cost savings associated with year-round and four-day patterns.

The issue of financial feasibility continues to be of prime importance in considering any adjustment to the traditional school year/day. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers. Only careful analysis of real situations will determine whether or not proposed adjustments will prove to be economic. Hough (1990) discusses the difficulties of determining cost effectiveness and suggests that, if budgets are used for cost analysis, three possible methods may be used for comparison. These include:

- Comparison of the same school budget to those of prior years.
- Comparison of a specific budget to that of a matched school operating on a traditional pattern.
- Comparison of a specific school budget to a simulated one for the same school if it were on a traditional pattern.

Hough points out, however, that total cost is a misleading determinant since only per-pupil expenditures allow for true cost comparisons. He also cautions that this approach assumes the accuracy of any given budget; that expenditures are as planned and that they are made as outlined.

D. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

Suggested Approach

The question of employee acceptance of any adjustment to the school year/day warrants careful consideration. Support staff, as well as professional staff are partners in the enterprise as employees and community members. It is essential that any move toward change to the traditional school schedule take into account the perspectives of employees both individually and collectively. Changes must take into consideration concentration of work and what is reasonable without increasing or decreasing the service expectation. The impact of any school year/day change on negotiated or legislated matters at either the provincial or local level will have to be addressed.

Questions for Consideration

1. What procedures will be used to analyze possibilities and determine the most appropriate adjustment in terms of employee acceptance?
2. What information and support will be necessary in discussing possibilities?
3. What processes for information and dialogue will be provided?
4. How will the topic of change be introduced?
5. What specific groups of employees will be contacted/involved? How?
6. What time interval will be provided for discussion?
7. How will opposition to change be dealt with?
8. What procedures for decision-making will be put in place?
9. What specific plans will be made regarding collective bargaining with both professional and support personnel?
10. How important a factor will employee acceptance be in deciding upon any change?

Overview

Like public acceptance, the issue of employee acceptance of school year/day adjustment is crucial to the success of the endeavour. The question of employee acceptance is complicated by the fact that, in most instances, there are both professional employees (teachers, administrators, special service personnel, etc.) who work under the terms of the Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement and support staff (secretaries, bus drivers, custodial and maintenance personnel, etc.) who work under contracts negotiated with unions and consistent with The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act. In addition, there are those employees who work under locally-drawn contracts. As a result, any discussion of employee acceptance must take into consideration the positions and provisions of the organizations to which they belong as well as their personal preferences. This means that at least two dimensions of acceptance must be determined - the acceptability of the proposed adjustment to the parent organization (e.g. Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation and Canadian Union of Public Employees) and the individuals themselves.

Little exists in the literature pertaining to acceptance of readjustments to the traditional school year/day by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) and Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). It is safe to assume, however, that the STF will be most interested in guaranteeing that any adjustment will provide adequately for all legislated and negotiated teacher benefits including salaries, working conditions, health related benefits and pensions. It is also safe to assume that, in the case of unionized support staff (which account for the majority in the province), there will be a similar concern by CUPE to guarantee the "security" of its membership in the face of any change. While it is not possible, in this brief overview, to explore this topic fully, it is important to note that any proposed readjustment can have significant impact on collective bargaining and other employment negotiations with employees.

The literature is more revealing of the personal acceptance of professional employees (teachers and administrators) to restructuring. As in many questions of this kind, positions vary. For example, a recent study (Hoffman, Chris and Others, 1991) conducted with classroom teachers in a rural county in North Carolina, indicates that teachers are opposed to adjusting the traditional 180 day schedule to a year-round schedule. On the other hand, Thompson reports that in studies conducted during the early

1980's in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico and elsewhere in the United States, teachers were positive about adjustments, both to the day and the year (Thompson, 1985). A recent study in Utah conducted by the Utah State Board of Education in 1989, indicates that 84% of year-round teachers prefer to teach on a year-round schedule while only 49% of extended-day teachers prefer teaching on the extended-day schedule. Only 28% on a traditional contract said they would prefer an extended day. In Saskatchewan, there is a general acceptance among educators of the status quo although some desire for change is indicated by specific groups. Significantly, a majority of respondents are opposed to lengthening the school day in order to shorten the length of the school year (Penner, 1985 and Randhawa and Hunt, 1985).

Indications of acceptance by support staff to restructuring the school day or year are difficult to find, possibly due to the lack of investigation. In Utah, it was observed that in both year-round and extended-day schools, custodians and office staff both experience additional challenges and stress (Moss, 1989) due to restructuring. In California, custodial and office staff experience extra stress and disruption of traditional routine as do maintenance personnel, food service personnel and bus drivers who must work over the summer due to the adjusted school year (Apker, 1988). While no definitive information is available regarding levels of acceptance among support staff, it is reasonable to suggest that there is a need to devote attention to their perspectives during any investigation of or move toward adjustments to the traditional school year since their lives are affected to a degree equal to that of professional staff.

E. LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Suggested Approach

The question of legislative feasibility regarding adjustment of the school year/day requires careful analysis of both the existing legislation and the implications of the proposed change. While a degree of flexibility is provided through permissive statements in the legislation, it is important to clarify intents (eg. Does "adjust" the school day allow one to "extend" the school day?) As in the case of employee acceptance, it is important to consult with affected organizations and legal counsel. In the event of a request to the Minister of Education for change, it is important to indicate the benefits which would result, the effect of consultation with stakeholders and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effects of the adjustment (Penner, 1985).

Questions for Consideration

1. What procedures will be used to analyze possibilities and determine the most appropriate adjustment in terms of current provincial legislation?
2. What specific questions need to be addressed in terms of interpretation of current provincial legislation?
3. What determinants/processes will be used in selecting a proposed adjustment?
4. Who will be involved in discussing feasibility and reaching decisions? How will they be involved?
5. How will any judgement/ approval of a proposed adjustment be obtained?
6. How important a factor will legislative feasibility be in deciding upon any adjustment?

Overview

The Education Act, 1978 provides for present school year/day structures. Certain aspects are governed by legislation while others are designated as the responsibility of local school divisions. In both cases, established practice exerts a significant influence on actual school

operation. The following summary of sections 164-168 of The Act and explanatory comments have been reproduced from the Saskatchewan Education Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on the School Year/School Day, 1985, which represents the most recent provincial investigation of school year/day patterns in the province.

> "At the present time some aspects of the school year/school day are governed by legislation, others are based on established practice, and still others are the responsibility of local school jurisdictions.
>
> The Education Act specifies the school year is 200 days in length, but also provides that the Minister may determine a lesser number of school days in any year if he/she considers it advisable. For the past several years, the Deputy Minister of Education has met with the presidents of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association in order to provide the Minister of Education with a recommendation concerning length of the school year. The Minister has set the school year in accordance with those recommendations. For the past few years the school year has been 197 days.
>
> The legislation does not differentiate between length of the teacher year and student year. In practice the school year set by the Minister has come to be the number of days that teachers work. Students generally attend school five to seven fewer days. When students are not in school, teachers participate in inservice sessions and preparation and wind-up activities at the beginning and end of the school year.
>
> The number of days in the student year is determined by local boards of education and may vary from one part of the province to another.
>
> The legislation specifies the school program is to be conducted between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon and between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. It permits boards of education to alter or shorten these school hours by as much as 30 minutes without requesting permission from the Minister.
>
> It also provides that, with the approval of the Minister of Education, boards of education can conduct classes outside of the 9 to 12 a.m. – 1:30 to 4 p.m. period mentioned in the legislation or can alter the prescribed school hours by more than 30 minutes.

The legislation specifies students should be allowed recess periods of between 15 and 30 minutes in each school day. However, it also provides that, where a board of education passes a resolution on the recommendation of the director or superintendent of education, the recess period in a day can total from 10 to 50 minutes.

The Education Act makes some provision for holidays: Saturdays, Sundays, Good Friday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, and the Queen's birthday (celebrated on Victoria Day) are specified. Dominion Day (Canada Day) is also identified as a holiday, but since it occurs on July 1, it becomes part of the summer vacation and is not celebrated as a separate holiday.

The legislation provides that additional holidays can be proclaimed by the Governor-General, Lieutenant-Governor, mayor or reeve, and that a board of education can declare other days (not exceeding one day at a time) as holidays. The Act also provides that boards of education can declare one or more Saturdays to be school days if they so wish.

The legislation sets guidelines for three specific vacation periods. Christmas vacation must commence not later than December 23 and must extend to at least January 2. Spring vacation (usually called Easter vacation) consists of the five days immediately following Easter Sunday. Summer vacation must be at least six weeks in length and must begin immediately after July 1. Individual boards of education can set a summer vacation period longer than the prescribed six weeks if desired, as long as they provide the number of school days determined by the Minister. Traditionally, most boards of education did choose a longer vacation period, usually eight weeks -- all of July and August. In recent years, however, some boards have resumed school before the end of August and have introduced an additional two to five day mid-winter vacation."

Examination of this summary of legislation and practice reveals that, in fact, considerable adjustment to the traditional school year/day is possible under the present legislation. It also reveals that, in spite of provisions for change, the traditional pattern of schooling continues to be the structure for use throughout the province. Penner indicates that a province-wide change in the school calendar is not appropriate but that additional flexibility in legislation should be provided so that local school jurisdictions can alter the school calendar to meet their unique situation." (Penner, 1985).

V. WHO WILL BE INTERESTED?

While a great many questions and uncertainties can be resolved through the use of pertinent, available information and procedures (such as those outlined in this publication), it will be necessary, at times, to consult with various individuals, agencies and organizations to either verify information or secure interpretations of the appropriateness of proposed adjustments. Such consultation is essential in an area as complex and potentially controversial as adjustments to the school experience of children. The following list provides several, although not necessarily all, groups which might be contacted, as well as suggestions regarding specific topics which might be dealt with by each:

Saskatchewan Education
- Legislation
- Funding
- Approval to proceed

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- Legislation
- Funding
- Position
- Supports
- Research

Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation
- Provincial agreements
- Research
- Position
- Supports

League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents
- Provincial agreements
- Research
- Position
- Supports

Canadian Union of Public Employees
- Legislation
- Position
- Supports

Saskatchewan Labour

- Legislation
- Position
- Supports

Legal Counsel

- Any/all matters regarding legislation, bargaining, contracts, funding, etc.

Others As Required/Desired:

Home and School Association

- Position
- Support
- Research

Business Community

- Position
- Support

Students

- Position
- Support

Local Service Groups and Organizations

- Position
- Support
- Research

Private Consultants/Evaluators

- Legislation
- Funding
- Position
- Supports
- Research

VI. CONCLUSION

As noted in the beginning of this document, school systems have successfully changed their school year/day from the traditional agrarian based model we use currently. Where the change has occurred, careful attention has been paid to the implications of the change. Each of these implications is important because we all know people are not likely to accept change for the sake of change.

When contemplating a change to the school year/day, patience is a virtue. And so is a carefully assessed plan and a positive will to succeed!

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